

—Sir John, is there any thing more to do? any reason why we should not be left alone?"

"None whatever, my dear.—Mr. Carter, Mrs. Mordaunt wishes the room cleared. Be good enough to retire with these gentlemen to the next."

So the company, much disappointed at the issue of events, disappear, and Sir John Coote goes with them, and no one is left with the heir of Fen Court but Irene and Isabella and the little child.

Oliver remains where he has thrown himself—miserable, abashed, and silent.

"Oliver," says Irene presently, in her sweet, sad voice, "be comforted. He did you a great injury, but he has tried to atone for it. Remember how kind and loving he always proved himself toward you, and forgive him for the want of courage that prevented his letting you know your real relationship from the first."

"*Forgive him!* when he has robbed you of every thing? When he has disgraced you in the eyes of the world by passing over your name in his will as though you were not worthy to be mentioned, instead of being the most careful, attentive, affectionate wife a man could have! He was not worthy of you. I never thought so little of him as I do now."

"Oh, hush, Oliver! Pray hush! You cannot know how you are wounding me. I do not pretend to be indifferent to the turn affairs have taken. It is a great disappointment and misfortune, and shame to me, but I feel that he is suffering for it now so much more than I am, that I forget my misery in the contemplation of his. And I cannot permit you to blame him before me. When Philip made that will, he thought that he was doing right, and I am very thankful that, as I was not to have it, he should have left his property to you instead of to some public institution."

"I am not thankful at all. I hate the very idea of surplanting you. I never will do it, Irene. I refuse to take advantage of my—my—*uncle's* imbecility, or to accept a trust which is rightfully yours, and which you have done nothing to forfeit. What! Do you think I will reign here while you are starving out in the cold? I will cut my throat first."

"I shall not starve, Oliver; I have my own little income. Philip knew that I was provided for."

"Pshaw!—a hundred a year. How can you live on that, who have been accustomed to every luxury? It is impossible."

"It is quite possible; and I mean to do it."

"My dear Mrs. Mordaunt," here interrupts Isabella, for the first time—"but what—have I understood rightly—why does Oliver speak of your leaving the Court?"

"Did you not listen to your brother's will?" replies Irene, quietly. "He has left every thing to—his son—"

"His son! Oh, dear! and you know it, then? And I always told Philip it would be so much better to tell at once. But why to his son? I don't think I can have listened properly—these things upset me so. You are not going away, my dear Mrs. Mordaunt?"

"I must go away, Isabella. Dear Philip (you must not blame him, for he thought that he was committing an act of justice) has made Oliver his heir; therefore Fen Court is no longer mine. But I am not ambitious, and I shall do very well, and will not have any of my friends concern themselves on my account."

"If you will not remain at Fen Court, neither will I," interposes Oliver.

"But where will you go?" demands Isabella, excitedly; "and you have so little money."

"Dear Isabella, don't worry yourself about that. I have plenty of places to go to, and kind friends to look after me, and I shall be very happy by-and-by," says Irene, with a sob, as she remembers how little truth there is in what she says.

"But we shall not see you," replies Miss Mordaunt, as she rises and advances to the side of her sister-in-law; "and—and—O Irene!" she goes on, becoming natural in her emotion, "don't go away, don't leave us again. You are the only creature I have loved for years."

"My dear Isabella!" says the young widow, as the tears rise to her eyes at this unexpected proof of affection, "why did you not let me know it before? It would have made me so happy."

"Oh! I couldn't—I didn't like—and then, you know, you had Philip. But now—and to think he could have wronged you so! Oh! my dear girl, *do* take my money—it's very little, but I don't want it. I have the legacy my father left me, and Oliver will let me stay on here. It would make me so much more comfortable to think you had it, and I couldn't touch a halfpenny of it, while things remain as they are."

"Bravo! Aunt Isabella!" exclaims Oliver. "I didn't think you were half such a brick. Live here? of course you shall! You must both live here, or I shall have the place shut up."

"What have I done that you should be so